

Part 2: Character Behavior

Once you understand *who* the characters are, the next questions concern *why* they act a certain way and *how* they change. Attempting to answer these questions not only takes you deeper into the story but also brings you closer to understanding the complexity of human behavior, including your own.

CHARACTER MOTIVATION

What prompted the man to steal a large sum of money? A character's **motivation**—the reasons behind his or her actions—can affect your perception of that character. For instance, the man might steal money to feed his family or to achieve a lifelong dream of wealth. How do these reasons affect your opinion of him?

Sometimes a character's motivation is stated directly in a story. Usually, though, you need to look for clues and details to try to figure out the motivation. As you read, pay attention to

- the narrator's direct comments about a character's motivation
- the character's actions, thoughts, and values
- your own insights into human behavior



STATIC AND DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

In addition to knowing why a character acts a certain way, it is important to analyze how a character changes as a result of the events in a story. A character might grow emotionally, learn a lesson, or alter his or her behavior. Characters who change and grow as the plot develops are **dynamic characters**. In contrast, characters who remain the same are **static characters**.

STRATEGIES FOR ANALYZING CHARACTER CHANGE

First examine the change:

- Compare how a character was at the beginning of the story with how he or she is at the end.
- Is the change **external**, such as in appearance or circumstance? Is it an **internal** change of attitude or belief?
- What factors, events, or characters contributed to or caused the change?

Then analyze the meaning:

- What lesson does the character learn, or what insight does he or she gain?
- Does the change show personal growth, or does it lead to the character's downfall?
- Would the character be motivated to change without the contributing factors?